

Steal This Hook!

Demon Princes Among Us

By Robert Wiese



Red and black skin, wings and sharp teeth. Heated breath and flames emanating from the creature before you. That's the idealized description of a demon from the pits of the Abyss, and what this month's set of adventure ideas is all about: Demons. Of course, they don't all look like that. Some are made of weird tentacles and fungus parts, some are oozy, some are stunningly beautiful. But they all mean harm to mortals for one reason or another. Even evil mortals should beware dealing with them, for unlike devils they have no conception of keeping their word. This month, we look at a trio of very different adventure ideas in which demon lords play important roles.

Where Are My Musicians? -- *Forgotten Realms*

Some matters are settled with combat while others can be settled in more peaceful ways... such is the case in a dispute between halflings and grigs about which is the better fiddler. Though the halfling homeland is south in Luiren, there are halflings living all across Faerûn. A troupe of halfling bards settled in Essembra, the most populous city in Battledale, where they quickly gained a reputation for their music, especially their playing of fiddles. The local grigs became jealous, or bored (it's hard to say which with a grig), and challenged the halfling troupe to a contest to determine the best fiddlers of the dale. The grigs and halflings would meet in the central square of Essembra and play for the people, and the people would choose.



However, with everyone waiting and the grigs getting restless, the halflings have failed to show up. The grigs claim that they knew they would be beaten, but there are others in town who know that the Halflings would never choose to miss a musical contest. The bards' biggest fan, retired Purple Dragon Knight Kisthin Amadals, asks the heroes to find out what happened to the halflings. He had booked them to play at a party at his mansion the following evening, and hopes the heroes can find them in time.

So what did happen to them? Fame could be said to be the root of their current predicament. The ancient city of Myth Drannor is somewhat close to Essembra, a city rife with drow and demons and what have you. Recently, an aspect of Graz'zt was sent to work with the surface drow as a sign of a an apparent (if temporary) alliance with Lolth. In truth, Graz'zt seeks to turn the drow to his own service, or at least make good use of them. The aspect found conditions intolerable, and set about making himself comfortable in his new home. Comfort -- for an aspect of Graz'zt -- includes every kind of decadence, with music naturally being one excess that must be plumbed to its depths. The aspect heard about the halfling bards, and had them abducted just before the competition. They are now trapped somewhere close to Myth Drannor, forced to do things with music that it is

best not to talk about.

d100 Motivations

01-50 Kisthin Amadals really is concerned, though he expects he has to find another group for his party. However, he feels some obligation to have the bards tracked down, in case they are in trouble.

51-70 Kisthin Amadals is not a Purple Dragon Knight at all, but a slaver working for Thayans. He had planned to sell the bards into slavery, and used the party as an excuse to get them to his mansion so that they could be caught.

71-00 The grigs, who are being blamed by a large number of townsfolk ("You can't trust them damned faeries!"), also seek out the heroes for help, to clear their names and possibly avoid sudden vigilante-style justice.

d100 Complications

01-30 Myth Drannor offers its own complications, ranging from drow to demons to other nasty monsters. The adventures should have great difficulty operating within a few miles of the place. Maps of the great dungeon might be available to help them, and they could use the maps later for additional adventures.

31-50 Aspects of Graz'zt are as seductive as succubi, and would try to ensnare the heroes in a web of sensuality that diverts them from their real intentions.

51-75 Drow unhappy with the presence of the aspect of Graz'zt might be willing to help the adventurers... for a price.

76-00 A fearsome half-fiend green dragon has also made its home in the area, and likes to snack on halflings. Indeed, one of the bards was already lost to it. Dragon parts are always valuable, even if halflings are not.

Gnomelantis -- Eberron

Long before the Kingdom of Galifar arose on Khorvaire, the other kingdoms of the continent had grown and faded. The gnomes of Zilargo had, in the past, advanced their borders northward into what is now Breland by establishing a city called Yerosin on an island in the middle of Lake Brey. There, the Zil could better watch what other nations were doing, and there their wizards studied advanced magic away from the general population.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. You'll want to get a copy of *Fiendish Codex I* to flesh out the demons you'll use, especially since it includes the statistics for Graz'zt. Any of the Myth Drannor publications should help too, as well as *Races of the Wild* for the elves that live in the vicinity.

Forgotten Realms: Set around Myth Drannor, as written.

Eberron: Set this adventure in the Eldeen Reaches. The Twilight Demesne would serve as home for the grigs, and the Gloaming could be where the aspect of Graz'zt is based.

Generic: You can really set this adventure anywhere there might be grigs living in your campaign world.

d20 Modern: There are probably only grigs in England, Wales, Ireland, or Scotland, if there are any at all. But you could make the sides into two opposing rock bands and have the adventure in Australia or the United States. The aspects convert easily to Modern Earth.





That all came to an end when the island and the city of Yerosin disappeared. In one night, the island was gone and the city along with it. No warning came, and it was some time before the loss was discovered because no one could get a communication out before the devastation hit. For millennia people have wondered what happened to Yerosin, but the city was forgotten by all but the gnomes who keep the records of their history in Zilargo.

A week or two ago, a small ship carrying valuable cargo was sailing across Lake Brey when it capsized and sank. Two of the sailors, who had water breathing magic, went down with the ship so that they could report its location. They returned with a story of a fantastic city of glowing lights and ghostly gnomish forms at the bottom of Lake Brey. Yerosin had been found at last.

Such a find attracts attention from treasure hunters and scholars alike, and the scholars of Morgrave University knew they had to get a jump on everyone, or else valuable clues to the fate of the city could be lost. They quickly hired adventurers to go to the site and find answers.

Yerosin suffered a great magical calamity that resulted in the island sinking to the depths of the lake, weirdly preserving everyone in a kind of stasis. Gnomes stand as if they frozen in time while walking the streets; in fact, in the midst of all activities. Active spells are frozen too, creating very unusual perpetual illusions. Some spells have taken on life of their own and become living spells, though a living major image wanders around without hurting anyone. Many of the treasures of the gnomes have been looted by underwater creatures over the centuries, but many other treasures remain in hidden places.

The city has not been left idle in all these centuries. Different lake creatures have laired near it from time to time, and even a lich called it home for a time during the early years of the Last War. Now it's the home of a group of sea hags, aquatic demons and aquatic ogres that worship the ancient demon prince Dagon.

This area can be a suitable for a small adventure, or can open up a whole mini-campaign as the adventurers explore the city, fight the monsters there, and eventually try to raise it to the surface. It could even turn out that the original sinking of Yerosin was due to some pact with Dagon that must be undone.

d100 Motivations

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Stormwrack* will be useful for fleshing out the underwater aspects of this scenario and handling underwater combat. The aspects of Dagon and Juiblex are presented in the *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* web enhancement on the Wizards website, and the demon princes themselves are presented in *Fiendish Codex I*.

Forgotten Realms: Set the lost gnome city in the Sea of Fallen Stars, in the south near Turmish. Make sure it is far enough from any sahuagin or aquatic elf settlements that it would not have been discovered.

Eberron: Set this adventure as written in Lake Brey. It is the closest huge lake to the gnome nation of Zilargo.

01-50 Morgrave University is serious about its aims, though it would really like any recovered artifacts as well.

51-70 Scholars from the Library at Korranberg would also like to know about the lost city, and will pay the adventurers for a copy of whatever information they find. This would violate their contract with Morgrave University, but will make them very rich.

71-00 The gnomes of Zilargo are very interested in their lost city as well, but don't want any humans poking around there without responsible gnomes as guides.

d100 Complications

01-35 Other creatures live in the lake, and they are hungry.

36-55 An aspect of Dagon has recently appeared among the sea hags, in response to the discovery of the city by the surface folk. Its goal is to protect Dagon's worshippers.

56-70 An aspect of the Faceless Lord, Juiblex, has appeared here as well, to oppose the efforts of the aspect of Dagon and claim the underwater world and its treasures for its dread master.

71-00 The magic that brought down the city could be undone, and that would cause the city to rise and everything in it to return to life. The rising of the island would cause flooding in any towns surrounding Lake Brey.

Death and Burning Blood -- *Forgotten Realms*

The Sword Coast North is a harsh land of cold and mountains and almost constant conflict. Monsters from the Spine of the World threaten anyone who settles too close to the mountain range, and orc hordes sweep from the mountains to decimate the towns. In these lands, people either live in the large cities (which essentially function like islands), or in small groups on their own pursuing a living from the land. Rarely do these two "worlds" meet.

In Silverymoon lives a wizard called Nostar. He is developing a special cold-based spell to use against ice devils, and he needs some frost giant components (including a large patch of unmarked skin). In return for some adventurers going and getting what he needs, he is willing to offer one or more treasure maps that have come into his collection. He would want 10% of whatever is recovered, but he has maps to treasures in ancient Gauntlgtrym (see *Lost Empires of Faerûn*, page 143), Old Illusk (*Lost Empires of Faerûn* page 144), and a lost Netherese city in the edges of the Anauroch. Nostar can also tell them about the general area and where frost giants are most likely to be found.

Once on the way, the adventurers run into a small town that has been decimated by something quite large. Every person in town has been killed, all buildings destroyed, and blood covers everything. The people here were killed horribly, and tracks lead

Generic: Set this adventure at the bottom of a deep lake or sea, where it might eventually be discovered but is not likely to be.

d20 Modern: This adventure is suited for Atlantis-themed campaigns or areas, and you actually could use the island of Atlantis and extraterrestrial wizards or psionic aliens. Converting the demons should be easy enough.

Campaign Adaptation

Here are some suggestions for different campaign worlds. *Frostburn* should help you with the cold setting, and *Silver Marches* would be useful for the setting information if you are in the **Forgotten Realms**. The aspect of Kostchtchie is detailed in the *Fiendish Codex I: Hordes of the Abyss* web enhancement on the Wizards website, and Kostchtchie himself is presented in *Fiendish Codex I*.

Forgotten Realms: Set just south of the Spine of the World, as written.

Eberron: If you don't want to set this adventure on the Frostfell continent, you could have frost giant barbarians led by the aspect of Kostchtchie sail to the northern parts of Khorvaire and attack villages and towns there.

back toward the Lands Against the Wall.

Kostchtchie, demon lord of frost giants, has sent an aspect to a newly converted tribe of frost giants to lead them in bloody conquest of the lands around them. The aspect leads his giants against human settlements as well as other giant settlements -- even other frost giant settlements.

d100 Complications

01-40 Once the adventurers have the frost giant parts and have dealt with the raging tribe, they will attract the attention of other frost giants.

41-75 There are a lot of other monsters to worry about in the Spine of the World. The trip should be a constant battle, or series of battles, against a lot of frosty opponents.

76-00 The weather will complicate things as well, especially as the adventures get higher into the mountains.

Generic: Barbarian hordes can crop up just about anywhere, but frost giant hordes require cold high peaks. Set this adventure somewhere in the cold north.

d20 Modern: Barbarian hordes are a thing of the past on Modern Earth (at least the real earth), but you might introduce some in Mongolia or Siberia. Giants would exist in a small enclave in an *Urban Arcana* campaign, and in that case the Alps and France or Spain might be an interesting setting.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.